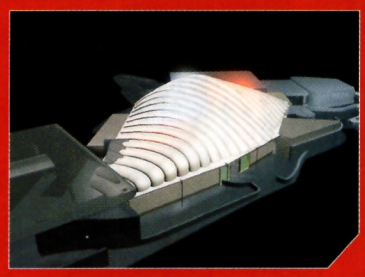
COACH AND BUS WEEK

CBW

THE PSV INDUSTRY'S LEADING NEWS WEEKLY

JUNE 30, 2005 ISSUE 685



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Smart as paint

S&G adds the final finish for Johnsons

EXCELSIOR BOSS HAS HIS SAY IN OUR 2-MINUTE INTERVIEW...

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COACH AND BUS WEEK CBW

INSIDE THIS WEEK

NATEX TAKES OVER AT HEATHROW National Express has drafted in the services of Per Lindstrand, Richard Branson's ballooning partner, to put the lid on a redevelopment of the Heathrow coach hub

NEWS CNG buses are still going into Europe, despite the waning enthusiasm here in the UK. Even Turkey has ordered 400 of them

SUPPLIER FOCUS Sharp paintwork has become a hallmark of S&G Coachworks

DELIVERIES Guess what Docherty has just bought? All the latest coach and bus deliveries across the UK

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

CBW

Coach and Bus Week is a member of the following organisations

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'YELLOW BUSES, UK-WID

Educational trust says US model should be adopted nationally

KEY FACTS

Annual cost of school buses	£662 million (2003)
SHIFT IN TRAVEL TO SCHOOL, BY MODE	
Primary school (1985/2001)	
Bus	9%/6%
Walking	67%/54%
Car	22%/39%
Secondary school (2001)	
Bus	29%/32%
Walking	52%/43%
Car	10%/18%
YELLOW BUS TRAVEL IN THE USA	
Number of vehicles	440,000
Children using yellow bus	23.5 m
Proportion of total	54%
Annual cost per pupil	$500
Road fatalities p.a. (Total/Bus)	42,815/18
PROJECTED COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS	
(Primary school yellow bus scheme)	
*Parental savings	
Car transport	£33m
Extra work time	£94m
Non-work driving time	
Parents	£131m
Non-driving parents	£91m
* Societal benefits	
Safety	£7m
Goods vehicle time	£8m
Environmental	£9m
TOTAL SAVINGS	£458M
COST OF SCHEME (WITHOUT SUBSIDY)	£184M
OVERALL BENEFIT	£274m

Source: The Sutton Trust, *www.suttontrust.com*
Report available via *www.cbwnet.co.uk*, under Useful Links

MARK WILLIAMS, EDITOR

A REPORT from a children's trust has called for 'yellow-bus' schemes to become the national standard.

The Sutton Trust's report, No More School Run, underlines the social and environmental cost of car journeys to school, and draws heavily on the example of the USA and pilot schemes in West Yorkshire and elsewhere to promote dedicated school buses.

The Sutton Trust laments that the Government's School Transport Bill was interrupted by the general election but says it would have allowed local authorities more freedom in laying down which children qualify for the school bus, and would have allowed them to charge for it.

The report identifies dedicated school buses as 'by far the safest form of transport' and says that, when costs take into account the environment, accidents, healthcare and the cost of car journeys, savings could amount to £450 million a year.

It says the 1944 Education Act, which laid down transport entitlement, has been overtaken by recent events such as parental choice of schools, working patterns of parents and busier roads: "Free buses are often limited to rural areas or to those attending denominational schools," it comments.

Where a school bus transport is available, its says DfT research reveals parents hold it in low regard, "complaining of overcrowding, lack of seatbelts, poor value for money and the poor attitude of drivers."

The £662 million spend on home-to-school buses in 2002/03 had shot up 18% from the previous year, it says: "The average cost for a single trip by a child on a private bus was £1.50, compared to an average cost per passenger on public transport of 63p." It says half the budget, though, goes on Special Educational Needs pupils, whose daily travel costs £20 per head on average.

The report claims 40 deaths a year are caused by the car 'school run', which also pours two million tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere and uses 500 million litres of fuel - but car transport is mainly the choice of the upper socio-economic classes - families lower on the scale tend either not to choose schools or choose those closest to home.

In the USA, says the report, 440,000 yellow buses carry 23.5 million children to school - 54% of all children. In fact, there are 3½ times

NATEX LANDS AT HEATHROW STATION

NATIONAL EXPRESS is investing £2.5 million in Heathrow Airport's Central Bus and Coach station.

NatEx has commissioned Richard Branson's ballooning partner Per Lindstrand to design a huge inflatable roof for the new structure - which is both transparent to let natural light in during the day and self supporting so it does without pillars. This is the first time such a structure has been used in the transport sector anywhere in the world, and it will be in place by the end of 2005.

"For many foreign travellers, Heathrow bus station is their first impression of this country," says a spokesman for National Express. "The present building does not really give the right impression. We wanted to do something more interesting."

The three-storey 1,100-square-metre structure is certainly that, but there is more to the £2.5m development than a fancy roof. There will be 200 extra seats for passengers, all covered, a new ticket office, new and bigger food outlets and shops and the latest in timetable and service information.

A prototype of the new roof will be unveiled at Lindstrand's workshop in Oswestry in early July, by which time work on the redevelopment at Heathrow will be well under way. To minimise disruption to passengers, the project is on a tight schedule. National Express aims to have the new station up and running by December.

National Express has also concluded a deal to take over the on-site management of the facility from Heathrow Airport. The contract runs until the end of 2010.

■ Meanwhile, work is proceeding to plan on National Express' new headquarters and coach station at Digbeth, Birmingham.

The plan was formally announced last November and features multi-storey glass fronted mezzanine floors.

E' SAYS REPORT

First runs 20,000 yellow buses in the US, and is growing its UK fleet

as many yellow buses as service buses. Typically, children more than a mile from school travel free, at an annual cost of $500 (£270) per pupil.

The report says the US system results in purpose-built buses with "high safety standards" without seatbelts.

"The US yellow bus system is a practical reminder of how the UK could do things better," it says.

First Group, it says, not only runs 40 'yellow buses' itself in the UK but 20,000 of them in the States and Canada. It also runs Metro's vehicles in West Yorkshire. On one service, in Hebden Bridge, 64% of the 100 or so pupils previously travelled to school by car.

The Sutton Trust report calculates that, to replace and improve the transport system for primary schools alone would involve 4,200 'yellow buses' costing £184 million a year, mitigated by £41 million in 50p single fares and £60 million subsidy, leaving central government to pick up an £83m tab.

It suggests a smartcard system of payment aligned to free school meals, to take into account low-income families, and entitlement for any child more than a mile from school.

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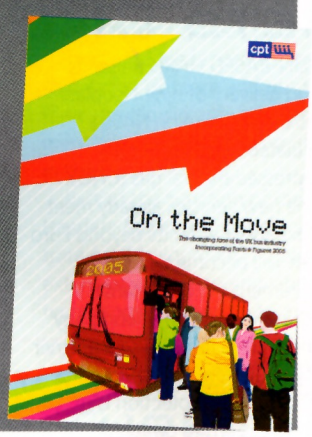
MINISTER LAUNCHES CPT FACT BOOK

THE Confederation of Passenger Transport has launched the latest version of On The Move, the definitive guide to the industry.

The booklet - relied upon by media and others - this year not only details key figures but also explains the year's success stories and safety initiatives, the environmental credentials of PSVs and the ability of the industry to improve social inclusion.

The completely redesigned booklet was launched today (Thursday, June 30) by new minister for buses Karen Buck, who also contributed the forward. Ms Buck combined the launch with a visit to the Lanchester-Newcastle X30/X31 bus route - the fastest-growing route in the UK. Since its launch, the service has grown 131%.



HENDY CHAIRS CFIT

TRANSPORT for London's managing director of surface transport, Peter Hendy, has been confirmed as the new chair of the Commission for Integrated Transport.

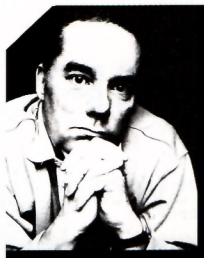
The appointment begins on July 1 2005 and runs for three years.

Peter Hendy follows Professor David Begg, who held the post until March 31.

PETROL HYBRID BUSES

PASSENGER service began this week in Long Beach, California, with the first of 27 new E-Power hybrid buses backed by a promotion likening them to hybrid cars such as the Toyota Prius.

The buses use Maxwell Supercapacitors in energy storage coupled with petrol-engined generators. The buses for Long Beach constitute part of the current build by New Flyer Industries of 76 similar units which will not only meet the (originally) very stringent requirements of Californiaís ZEV project but are claimed to beat the performance of CNG- and LNG-powered equipment. The new gasoline-electric buses are New Flyer 40-foot lowfloor models powered by Ford ULEV 6.8-litre V-10 engines.



EDITOR'S COMMENT

OH NO, NOT AGAIN!

NORMALLY, I would be only too pleased to hear that an organisation such as the Sutton Trust, which fights the corner for disadvantaged children, is endorsing bus travel.

However, attach that appeal to the words Yellow Bus and my suspicion is aroused, and sure enough the Trust's No More School Run report is just about as mangled a piece of thinking as I have seen.

I have no quarrel with the basic premise that we need fewer cars and more buses in evidence at the school gates - but, from the introduction onwards, the report is erroneously claiming that 'yellow buses' are safer than service buses, both in the USA and here, and I am already getting irritated.

The report makes many comparisons with the USA, as you'd expect, but let's face facts; America ferries its children to school in non-accessible, converted trucks. The moment those children reach 17, they are bought a car, and they wouldn't be seen dead in a bus for the rest of their lives. Hardly a great role model.

In the UK, we spend countless millions publicly funding under-used buses already. We need joined-up thinking, in which new, lowfloor buses start and end the day on a school run but the rest of the time service those same rural communities for the remainder of the disadvantaged - the elderly and those who, for other reasons, want to travel by bus.

It seems to me a great shame that the job of creating school transport policy isn't entrusted to those who actually know about running PSVs.

■ I am absolutely delighted that our number at *CBW* has been swelled with the arrival of Andrew Peace, our new reporter.

Andrew trained at Emap under the Peter Bolt Scholarship, a scheme named after an Emap editor who had a passion for introducing recruits to the unholy gossip and fact-mongering we laughably call 'work'. Andrew has a real passion for digging up the detail, and our news pages in particular will shortly display his flair.

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
EDITOR

NEOPLAN RESTRUCTURE

'ProNeo' system claimed to save cost and increase productivity

MARTIN COLE TECHNICAL AND MINIBUS EDITOR

NEOPLAN has marked 90 years in business by rationalising its production in Germany.

Named 'ProNeo' (an acronym of 'New Production' and 'Neoplan') the new system has been designed to eliminate parallel processes at all three production facilities in Stuttgart, Plauen and Pilsting.

Although models may have been different, processes at the three sites were broadly identical - such as body-in-white construction, component installation, final assembly, interior outfitting work and finishing - all labour-intensive areas. Neoplan concluded that technical production processes operating in parallel were insufficiently cost-effective and made it impossible to boost productivity and remain competitive.

NEOMAN Bus GmbH initiated ProNeo in 2003 at the three factories in addition to the 'Lowfloor Manufacturing Alliance' in Poznan, Starachowice and Salzgitter and the 'Evolution 2004' project completed only recently at the MAN location in Ankara. Its implementation required investment of over ten million Euros - with over 50% devoted to the Pilsting plant and over 25% to Plauen.

Instead of providing all manufacturing facilities for the various models at all three locations, each plant is now allocated a definite share of the production work and will act as a competence centre for these processes.

Plauen becomes the 'body-in-white competence centre' for all Neoplan coaches and intercity buses except for the Tourliner and Trendliner models produced in Ankara. Plauen will assemble up to 'semibus' level the new Starliner, Skyliner and Centroliner decker models to be taken to Stuttgart or Pilsting for completion.

Body frames for Euroliner, Cityliner, Spaceliner and Centroliner M models will travel to Pilsting, with a technical capacity of about 900 body frames annually, or some six per working day.

Pilsting now operates as the central assembly plant - using frames and also ready-to-run semibuses supplied from Plauen and will complete the Neoplan Centroliner E city buses, which arrive in pre-assembled ready-to-run form from Poznan or Starachowice in Poland.

The Stuttgart plant will continue to equip and finish the premium products including Skyliner and new Starliner. Stuttgart will also act as the competence centre for coach and intercity bus development. It will retain its prototype construction facilities and repair shop.

OPTARE COACH TO STAR AT SHOW

OPTARE is keeping a new coach under wraps until the Coach&Bus Live show in October.

The as yet unseen vehicle - which Optare says will complete a range that starts with the Bonito and rises in size to the Solera midi-coach - will be displayed alongside its Tempo bus, launched earlier this year.

Organisers of the Coach&Bus Live show say the 150 companies exhibiting on October 5 and 6 have already made the event a success, with few stands now available. Big names exhibiting include Alexander Dennis, Neoman, Plaxton, Salavador Caetano UK, Toyota, Autosan, Ayats GB, BASE, BMC, Euro Coach Builders, Esker, Marcopolo, MCV, Mentor, Moseley, and Stamford Coachworks.

In addition to the exhibition space, the show will have a Ride & Drive area that will allow operators to sample the products on show themselves. In a novel twist, Vision Techniques will be filming the driving as part of the marketing for its array of CCTV and automatic number plate recognition products.

FACTFILE

Pre-registration forms with a holiday prize draw and details of stands available from *www.coachandbuslive.com*

VOLVO BUSES' FIRST INDIAN BUS ORDER

VOLVO BUSES has broken new ground by taking its first order for citybuses from India.

It is to supply 25 B7RLEs to the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation - which will be assembled at Volvo's plant in Bangalore. The bodies are built on the same design as the Volvo 8700 currently used in Europe. Engines are seven-litre units and built to Euro 3 specification.

Volvo has sold intercity coaches into India and in just over three years has built up sales of around 750.

Annual sales of citybuses in India total 10,000-12,000 each year.

BERLIN OPERATOR GETS CNG ARTICS

BERLIN-BASED HARU Reisen is taking delivery of nine Neoplan Centroliner Evolution N4521 articulated buses fuelled by compressed natural gas (CNG).

The new vehicles already meet the exhaust-gas limits beyond Euro 5 that will become a statutory requirement in 2009. Hans-Joachim Rudek, son of company founder Hans Rudek and a partner in HARU Reisen, said: "In Berlin, environmental protection is of special concern to our company. Neoman's experience has developed the lowest-emission series-produced engine so far.

Based on MAN technology the N4512 is 18m long and 2.5m wide - meeting the requirements of the new European bus directive in full. It has a large space for wheelchairs at the second entrance door, stop buttons on the outside within easy reach of disabled passengers and two manual folding ramps on the first two doors. Also fitted is a Webasto air-conditioning system with dust and pollen filters.

Over 2,500 MAN and Neoplan CNG buses are in operation worldwide with MAN natural-gas engines. The transport authority in Frankfurt/Oder has changed its entire fleet of 22 buses over to MAN natural-gas buses. The latest big order was for 23 rigid buses for Gothenburg and a further 61 for Helsingborg (Sweden). In the next few years up to 300 MAN chassis with CNG engines will be delivered to Brisbane, Australia. They will be completed by local bodybuilder Volgren.

S PRODUCTION

MERCEDES-BENZ IN TURKEY OPENS PSV PLANT IN HOSDERE

DAIMLERCHRYSLER AG has opened its extended coach and bus plant in Hosdere, close to Istanbul - creating one of the most sophisticated PSV production plants in the world.

The manufacturer's Turkish subsidiary will continue to transfer all of its coach and bus activities to the plant (right), which covers more than 360,000 square metres, with buildings occupying 115,000 square metres and equipped with the state-of-the-art production technology. The new factory will use standardised processes and technologies proven in Western European facilities to ensure the similar levels of quality - making Mercedes-Benz Turk AS an integral part of Daimler-Chrysler's European coach and bus business.

Production at Hosdere will include urban buses, rural-service buses and touring coaches under the Mercedes-Benz branding. The factory operates six days a week, employs 2,500 staff and will produce up to 11 vehicles per day. Around 60-70% will be aimed at export markets - mainly Eastern and Western Europe, the Arabian Peninsula and in North Africa.

Body panels and some body shells will continue to be produced at the Davutpasa facility until 2007 - the plant has already been sold. Body frames produced there are being shipped to Hosdere and put through the cathodic dip anti-corrosion treatment process before being finished in the main plant.

Part of the function of the Hosdere facility will be to concentrate on development. It now has extensive workshop and laboratory technology with which to experiment and develop non-metallic external panels and to investigate ecological and ergonomic designs and materials for cockpits and saloon fixtures and fittings.

MAN DELIVERS 400 CNG BUSES FOR TURKISH CITY

MAN Turkiye AS, NEOMAN Bus Group's Turkish subsidiary, has won orders from the city authorities of Ankara, EGO (Power, Gas and Bus Administration), for 450 buses.

The majority, 400, will be CNG (compressed natural gas) fuelled and will be built in Turkey for the first time. The deal is worth 60 million Euros. The 400 high-floor CNG city buses are the MAN Lion's Classic. They will be powered by E2876 LUH supercharged natural-gas engines rated at 310bhp and feature automatic gearboxes, MAN's EBS electronic brake system (ABS+ASR), electronic power assistance for the steering and a digital destination display. The other 50 vehicles in the order are diesels.

NEWS IN BRIEF

900 years at wheel

WILTS & Dorset has presented awards to 27 long-serving members of staff who have between them clocked up 900 years of service. Awards were given out to them at a dinner in Bournemouth attended by the group's chief executive, Chris Moyes, of Go-Ahead. Longest-serving staff were drivers Pat Perry of Porton depot, and Robert Clarke based in Poole.

Horse trading

A rider won £5,500 in damages from Lothian Buses after a bus spooked her mount on a flyover bridge. The animal tripped and fell but Tanya Buchanan was only slightly injured. She claimed her horse required stabling further from roads afterwards. A court heard the bus driver had been reading a piece of paper and had not seen gestures trying to get him to stop.

Txt 4 bs

Jersey operator Connex has made its timetables available by mobile telephone text. WAP enabled callers can log on to a website which will send the complete list. Passengers have, however, complained about the opening hours of Connex' bus call centre.

SMART move

The Operation Safer Travel team in the West Midlands has visited Year 7 children at a school to get the message across that bad behaviour can lead to accidents. The visit took the children on a short bus tour, on which they saw the CCTV system in operation.

Mackie's mile-high

Joe Mackie, commercial director of First Aberdeen, has been 'wing walking' to raise £3,000 for the Anthony Nolan Trust. Mr Mackie met the challenge during a fund-raiser which involved 20 members of the cast of TV soap *Emmerdale*, who were given VIP travel to Inchmarlo Golf Centre near Banchory.

Top banana

TOP Line Travel of York has appointed Tom Richardson operations superintendent. Mr Richardson spent five years driving and has been a supervisor since 2002. He will now lead Top Line's team of 16 full-time and 30 part-time staff.

MIKE'S ON THE BALL

Ex-professional soccer star enters exec minicoach market

MARTIN COLE, MINIBUS AND TECHNICAL EDITOR

EX-PROFESSIONAL footballer Mike Milligan has entered the executive minicoach market with a high-spec Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413 Cdi converted by Excel Conversions of Doncaster.

Based in Norwich, Mr Milligan will operate as Moco Travel and plans to cater for small parties of up to 12 passengers - taking in corporate hires and prestige events. The new vehicle is finished in black with dark tinted panoramic windows, full draw curtains and a full body and skirt kit - enhanced by EuroLiner stainless steel wheelcovers.

The interior is trimmed in pale blue/grey with dark blue curtains which contrast nicely with the 12 two-tone leather Gibicar Executive reclining seats supplied through Abacus Tubular Products.

The driver's seat is also trimmed in the same leather as those in the saloon. The seats are positioned around four wooden tables and two large fridges are fitted amidships, either side of the gangway. Both have mahogany tops with circular recesses to hold champagne bottles and glass flutes. Matching mahogany window sill cappings are also fitted and a walnut-effect vinyl kit applied to the dash and fascia. Mood lighting is installed on the ceiling above the rear lounge area.

A Webasto pre-heater, saloon heating and air-conditioning system are also installed with the chilled air ducted through channels in the full-length parcel racks with equal distribution from front to back. Passenger entertainment is provided via a CD/DVD multichanger system. A pair of 15-inch drop-down LCD screens are also set into the ceiling - one for forward-facing and one for rearward-facing passengers. Four loudspeakers are set into the parcel racks.

Mr Milligan opted not to go for an extended body and the coach rear provides only limited boot space but this is equipped mainly to accommodate suit carriers. The vehicle is fitted with a towbar and a trailer will be used on outings where substantial luggage is involved.

Sprinter 413CDi for Moco Travel carries a high specification

Plush interior incorporates 12 Gibicar seats and four tables

New premises for Excel Conversions will officially open in August

ON THE MOVE

Excel Conversions' planned move is on schedule and the company has now taken possession of its new premises. Following some alterations to divide up the office space, create a mezzanine floor, build a staff washroom, install a security system and erect external fencing with electric gates, director Peter Vernon said he hoped to be moved in and to hold an official open-day before the end of August.

DRIVER RETRAINING DIRECTIVE - ARTICLE

PETER Woodhouse, of Bond Pearce solicitors, who writes for our Legal Eagle column, has clarified some points he made on the proposed EU Driver Retraining Directive.

The reference to the directive was in his article entitled 'The legislative landslide' (Legal Eagle, *CBW* April 21).

He said: "I have had a chance to consider the article in some detail and comments raised regarding certain parts of it. I would like to say at this stage that, without an extremely detailed tracing exercise through the draft European proposals, consultation process and then final draft the one error that has now been identified in the article would not have been spotted. This is that the basic training requirement is not 420 hours and 210 hours as published. Instead it is 280 and 140 hours respectively.

"It is also worth noting that the minimum age for class D & D+E is going to be 24 for professional drivers unless they hold a CPC whereupon they can still drive those vehicles from the age 21.

"I hope this helps and apologies for any confusion to any readers."

Stagecoach results show turnaround through growth

ORGANIC growth in its UK bus and rail operations helped Stagecoach deliver an improved set of results.

The group has virtually completed a turnaround from the disastrous situation a few years ago, when it was forced to dispose of much of its US business and sell off its interests in the Far East.

Results for the year April 30 2005 show that group turnover on continuing operations grew 8.9% from £1.64bn to £1.79bn and group operating profits rose 2.4% from £129.7m to £132.8m, with more than half of it coming from UK bus operations.

The group's pre-tax profits before goodwill and exceptionals was £136.8m compared with £120.2m a year ago, although, after various deductions, the retained profit for the year fell 36% from £66.2m to £43.3m, mainly due to exceptional items being added back last year.

More than half of the operating profit (£82.5m) came from the UK bus division, with the operating margin holding at 11%. Turnover in the UK rail division rose from £438.9m to £479.4m, with operating profit rising from £44.1m to £48.6m and, in North America, turnover rose from £205.3m to £213.7m, with operating profits holding at £14.8m. In New Zealand, where Stagecoach is the largest operator, turnover rose marginally from £58.3 to £59m but operating profits fell from £10.7m to £8.7m, and its share of the operating profit of the Virgin Rail joint venture fell from £13.5m to £12.7m despite turnover rising from £288.4m to £315.2m.

Some elements of the disposed business in Hong Kong, investments in China and former businesses in the US also crept into the accounts but the general position was one of growth in the core business and a return to profitability from losses posted in previous years, which has been reflected in a steady growth in the share price - now more than double that of a few years ago.

PROFIT AND LOSS

Year ended April 30	2005 £m	2004 £m
Turnover:		
Continuing operations	1,472.4	1,352.7
Share of Virgin j/v	315.2	288.4
Disposals	7.1	151.2
Total Turnover	1,794.7	1,792.3
Total operating profit	156.7	147.5
Operating profit (after exceptionals)	132.8	129.7
Pre-tax profit	136.8	120.2
Pre-tax profit (after exceptionals)	108.3	95.8
Retained profit	43.3	6.2

DIVISIONAL RESULTS

	2005	2004
UK Bus:		
Turnover	720.3	650.2
Operating profit	82.5	74.8
UK Rail:		
Turnover	479.4	438.9
Operating profit	48.6	44.1
North America:		
Turnover	213.7	205.3
Operating profit	14.8	14.8
New Zealand:		
Turnover	59.0	58.3
Operating profit	8.7	10.7
Other (inc Virgin j/v and discontinued):		
Turnover	322.3	439.6

Deckers for Dublin

DUBLIN BUS, Bus Atha Cliath, has taken delivery of the first of 70 new Volvo double-decks, which will increase capacity and significantly boost the number of fully accessible routes across the city.

Fifty Volvo B7TLs with 76-seat Alexander Dennis ALX400 bodywork are being put into service on routes from Conyngham Road, Phibsboro, Summerhill and Harristown depots over the next few weeks, directly replacing 74-seat Olympians and creating new accessible corridors.

Later in the year, the city will see its first tri-axle deckers, when a batch of 20 Volvo B9/Enviro 500s are put into service from Donnybrook Garage, servicing the flagship Stillorgan QBC (Quality Bus Corridor). The new deliveries will bring the lowfloor decker fleet to 478, all but ten of which are Volvo.

NATEX GROUP

NATIONAL Express Group claims in its pre-close statement for the six months to June 30 2005 that earnings remain in line with expectations.

The statement says the group continues to generate strong operating cash flow.

Its train division is performing strongly and the coach division has seen sustained growth in passenger numbers.

Growth is attributed to improvement in the express route network and high emphasis on delivering best-value fares. Investment continued in improving passenger facilities.

Bus operations also continue to trade in line with expectations but are under pressure from increased fuel costs. Passenger growth in the West Midlands was said to be a "challenge" - particularly among concessionary fare travellers.

Presence in London was now doubled thanks to the completed acquisition of Tellings Golden Miller's bus operations.

North American school transit was said to have experienced good organic growth on a number of school contracts and good margins had been retained. The full interim results will be announced on July 28 2005.

EVENTS

August 2 - 4: RDA Workshop, Cologne, Germany. *www.rda-workshop.de*

August 14: Wessex Transport Society fourth Festival of Transport, Avon Heath Country Park, a31, near Ringwood, Hants. 01202 293245

September 12-14: Tourism Ireland education trip to East Ireland (including Dublin). 020 7518 0800, *fcreedon@tourismireland.com*

September 14-15: Passenger Transport Solutions, Olympia, London. *www.aboutpts.com*

September 15: RDA Market Seminar, Bridgewood Manor Hotel, Rochester, Kent. *Dr.patridge@t-online.de,* 0049 6997 84 0206

September 19-21: Tourism Ireland education trip to West Ireland. 020 7518 0800, *fcreedon@tourismireland.com*

September 20: Transport Innovation Fund Conference - Radical Solutions to Transport Problems, CBI Conference Centre, London. 01224 263134

September 29: Ergomechanics conference - seating and back pain, Amberg, Germany. 00 49 9621 880886, *sandra.mohr@grammer.com*

September 29-30: International Group Leisure & Travel Show, Hall 1, Wembley, London. 01908 613323, e-mail *sharon.d@leisureshow.com - www.leisureshow.com*

October 5-6: Coach & Bus Live 2005, NEC, Birmingham. 0870 224 8617

October 21-26: Busworld, Kortrijk, Belgium. 00 32 51 226060, *info@busworld.org*

November 7-9: Euro Bus Expo, NEC. 0870 224 8619, *eurobusxpo@expom.co.uk*

November 28-29: Scottish Transport Awards Dinner & Conference, Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa, Edinburgh. 01224 263134

2006:

March 14-16: International Road Transport Union 30th World Congress, Dubai World Trade Centre. *www.iru.org*

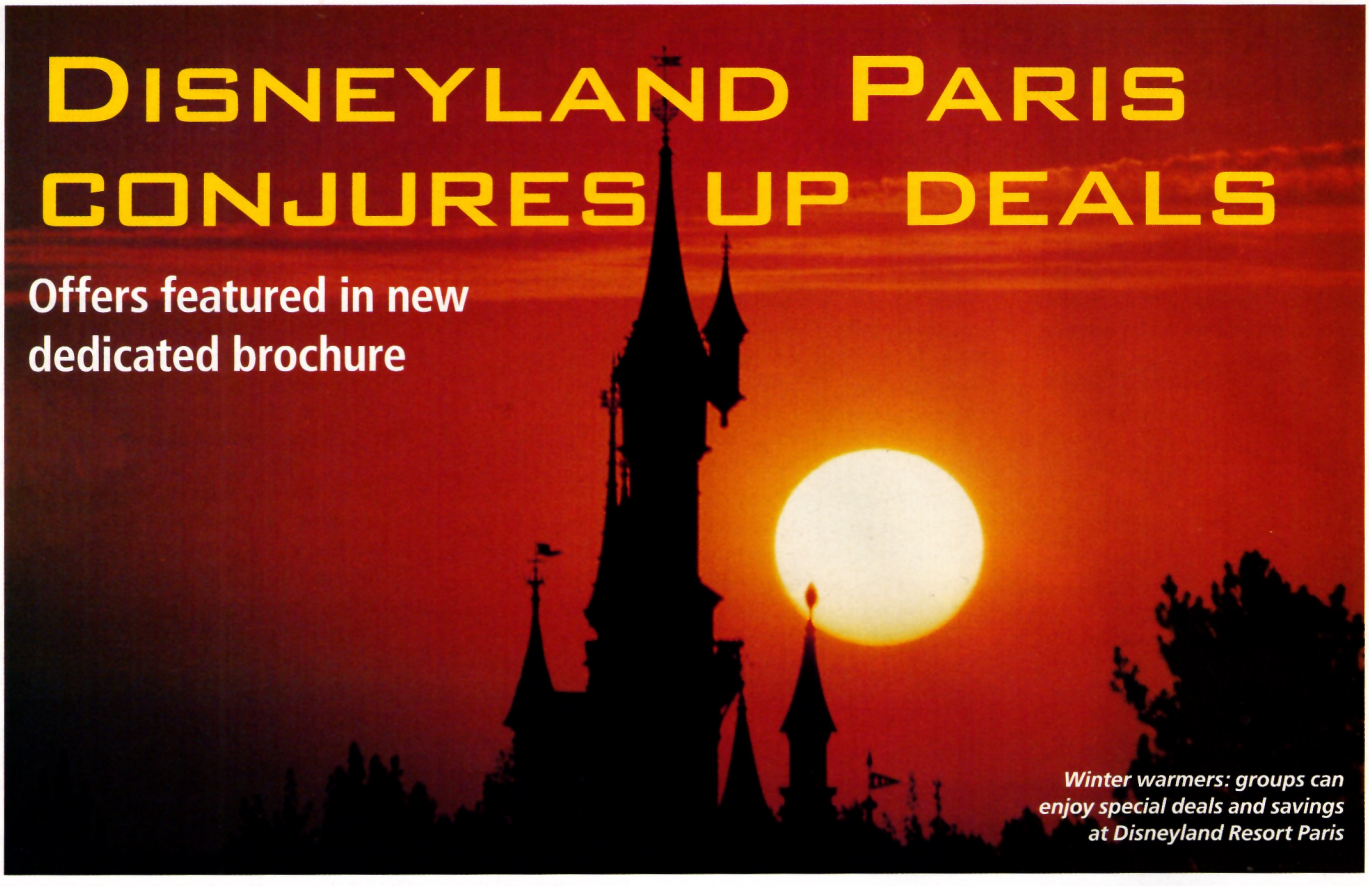
April 4: London Transport Awards Dinner, London Hilton. 01224 263134

April 22/23: UK Coach Rally, Brighton

If you have an event that you would like *Coach and Bus Week* to let people know about, please e-mail your information to: *mark.williams@emap.com*

DISNEYLAND PARIS CONJURES UP DEALS

Offers featured in new dedicated brochure



Winter warmers: groups can enjoy special deals and savings at Disneyland Resort Paris

WILLIAM GOLDEN, CORRESPONDENT

NEW menus and special savings are on offer to UK groups from Disneyland Resort Paris.

The French attraction features the offers for arrival between November 7 and March 31 2006 in its new, dedicated group tickets brochure.

Disneyland Resort Paris is hosting special events through the winter, including:

- The Christmas Season from November 5 to January 8 2006, including the Christmas markets at Disney Village from December 9 to January 1
- Magic Unlimited, which runs from January 9 to February 3 and offers unlimited rides on selected attractions
- The Kids' Carnival at the Disneyland Park from February 4 to March 12.

Group bookings of 12 or more passengers can save through Disneyland Resort Paris's special offers and, in addition, parties who visit between January 2 and March 31 2006 can benefit from the Kids Free Offer, whereby they receive one dated child ticket free for every adult ticket purchased. The offer is valid for children from three to 11 inclusive.

In addition, during the Super Magical Weeks, which run from November 14 to 20 and from January 9 to 15 2006, visitors can enjoy savings of up to eight Euros (£5.36) per person on a one-day, one-park adult ticket. During Magical Weeks, which run from December 5 to 11, January 30 to February 5 and March 6 to 12 2006, there is a discount available of up to six Euros (£4.02) per person on a one-day, one-park adult ticket.

To counter hunger pangs, Disneyland Resort Paris has created new group reservation menus, which can be booked together with park tickets via the group reservation department. Prices start at 16 Euros (£10.72) per adult.

Other incentives include one free ticket for every 20 paying customers, maximum flexibility enabling members of the same group to visit different parks on the same day, free ticket delivery for fully prepaid bookings made at least 15 days in advance, no deposit and no cancellation fee. Early booking benefits include major savings on tickets and free coach parking.

The Kids Free Offer applies to pre-purchased tickets only and can be combined with the Magical and Super Magical weeks offer. It is not valid for school, youth, senior or disabled group tickets.

The offer is also applicable on Buffalo Bill's Wild West Dinner Show tickets from January 2 to March 31, when pre-purchased with dated park tickets.

Discounts are also available for Hopper tickets for groups of 12 or more for the stated arrival dates and may be combined with the Kids Free offer. The discounts apply to pre-purchased dated tickets only and they are not valid for school, youth or senior group tickets.

For bookings and more information call group reservations on 00 33 1 6030 2070 or e-mail dlp.cro.uk.groups@Disney.com

GREEN LIGHT FOR BOOZE CRUISES?

THE ending of duty-free allowances did much to curb the enthusiasm for booze cruises but another factor was what was seen as an over-zealous campaign by HM Customs & Excise.

Intransigent officers were accused of targeting coach groups - the response from Customs & Excise was to claim that some passengers were being employed by gangs to travel frequently and return each time with their maximum recommended amounts of alcohol and tobacco.

The bone of contention remains, though, which is that HM Revenue and Customs can confiscate large purchases of alcohol and tobacco if they think that the goods are likely to be resold.

The current recommended guidelines are 3,200 cigarettes, 90 litres of wine and 110 litres of beer. However, there was a glimmer of hope earlier this month when members of the European Parliament voted to allow the rules of the single market to prevail, so that travellers could bring back unlimited amounts.

The vote is not binding across the European Union but it is to be hoped that it may lead to a change in policy on this side of the Channel. Of course, nobody wishes to condone smuggling but it is high time that the Government as a whole adopted a sensible policy that did not penalise the law-abiding holidaymaker.

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LET THE BUS DO THE WALKING

Get in step and follow James Bond and the Beatles on walking tours around London

Big Bus Company: London Walking Pass 'another first'

THE Big Bus Company has launched the capital's first walking pass that entitles customers to go on five tours.

The walking tours included in the pass, which is valid for two days, are Royal London Walk, The Big Bus Beatles Walk, World of James Bond, Ghosts by Gaslight and the Movie Location Walk. All walks, which are fully guided, take 90 minutes and depart from the Big Bus stop in Trafalgar Square, just by the National Gallery.

Mark Osborne, the company's manager, said: "The London Walking Pass is another first for us. We are delighted to offer people the chance to see parts of London they wouldn't usually see, at a very competitive price. London is steeped in superb visual history and all our tours celebrate that.

"However, we would like people to appreciate buildings and areas with more recent cultural interest too and these feature on our James Bond and Movie Location walks, in addition to some great anecdotes and trivia."

Customers booking the standard Big Bus London tour ticket are still entitled to all five walks free with their ticket, as well as a Thames river cruise. Brought separately, each walking tour costs £5.

Tickets for The Big Bus cost £20 per adult (£18 if booked online at www.bigbustours.com) and £8 per child and are valid for 24 hours on three London routes. Book on 020 7233 7797 or go to the website for more information. Tickets are also available when boarding a tour or in advance from The Big Bus Information Centre in Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria.

CTC AT WEMBLEY

THE Coach Tourism Council (CTC) is looking for seven members to join the council on its stand at the International Group Leisure & Travel Show, held at the Wembley Exhibition Centre in London on September 29 and 30.

The cost per table on the stand will be £845, plus VAT, and includes a table with three chairs, a catalogue entry, signage and support from CTC staff. The CTC is looking for the seven members to make the stand cost effective.

There is also the opportunity for coach operator members of the CTC to display a vehicle in the designated coach display area. The cost of exhibiting a coach is £850, plus VAT, and includes a table, chairs and a catalogue entry.

For more details contact the CTC's administration office at Lombard House, 12-17 Upper Bridge Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2NF, tel 01277 762200 or e-mail *info@coachtourismcouncil.co.uk*

MOUSE ABOUT THAT THEN...

A German mouse has squeaked into the UK to meet the big cheeses of Eurolines and mark the launch of a new service from London to Europa Park, a theme park in Europe.

Euromouse was in London and Birmingham to promote the three times a week service from Victoria Coach Station in London last Friday, June 24.

German tour operator DERTOUR will be using the new service to offer travel packages to Europa Park, which is a major theme park destination on the continent and is only now being introduced to the British market. It boasts Europe's biggest and highest roller-coaster, 100 other attractions, 14 themed restaurants and luxury hotels.

John Gilbert, the managing director of Eurolines, said: "This is a fantastic theme park and we are confident that our service will be a popular and low-cost option for holidaymakers."

FERRY GOOD WIN!

BRITTANY Ferries, the leading ferry company on the Western Channel, received the Best Ferry Concept Award for its £100 million flagship, the Pont-Aven, at the Ferry Shipping (Shippax) Conference in Oslo, the Norwegian capital.

AMSTERDAM HOTEL OFFER

A special summer offer of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for 24.95 Euros (£17.47) per person is being offered to coach groups by the three-star Tulip Inn Amersfoort, which is not far from the centre of Amsterdam. The rate is based on sharing a twin room and is available in July and August. Half-board supplement is 20 Euros (£14.40) per person and the single supplement is 20 Euros a night, subject to availability.

As an added incentive, operators who book before July 10 will get free half-board accommodation for the driver and guide.

For reservations and more information, contact the hotel direct on 00 31 3346 20054 (fax 00 31 3346 19281) or e-mail *sales@tiamersfoort.nl*

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COACH AND BUS WEEK CBW

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Polish Study Tour will take in tourism and operation

IF you've ever wondered whether Poland would make a quality, low-cost destination for your tours, stop wondering and find out on our Polish Study Tour.

We've lined up the best in the Krakow region to show you what's on offer, and rounded the trip off with a visit to a local coach operator who will not only tell you what it feels like to be part of the EU, but will explain what he can do for fly-coach packages. Staying at the ideally located Wyspianski Hotel in Krakow, our group will visit two of Poland's most visited destinations, accompanied by professional guides and escorted by *CBW* and Success Tours.

The astonishing Wieliczka salt mines are a complete underground visitor attractions, all carved from salt. Begun in the Middle Ages, the salt mines are a UNESCO world heritage site, which combine examples of centuries of mining technology with sights that truly have the 'wow' factor.

Around a million visitors a year are drawn by this vast underground citadel which includes two, ornate, subterranean chapels and huge galleries which will take your breath away.

We also visit Auschwitz - said to be one of the most moving experiences. Possibly the best preserved of Hitler's death camps, it bears silent testimony to the horror of the genocide that is within the living memory of many coach tour passengers.

Krakow itself has plenty to offer, as a short tour of the city will demonstrate, but you can hear it from the horse's mouth during a visit to a local coach operator who will answer your questions about the attractions and what he can offer if you decide you might run fly-coach city tours.

Moving experience for groups: Auschwitz

The price includes:

- Flights from the UK
- Two nights at the Wyspianski Hotel, Krakow
- Half board
- Guided excursions
- Visit to a Polish coach operator

Book via *CBW*'s Study Tour partner, Success Tours, on 01225 764205 Ask for Julie Roseburgh or Lucy Garrett Details from *julie@success-tours.co.uk*

- £100 per person deposit payable, only refundable if the tour does not reach minimum numbers.

WIGAN BUSES GIVEN GRE

Bell grants O-licence to new,

JASON GREEN, CORRESPONDENT

A TRAFFIC commissioner has awarded an O-licence to Wigan Buses Ltd after its director decided to scale-down the size of his fleet.

The application submitted by Mr William Trezise was in the name of a new limited company, succeeding a previous enterprise that had seen compliance issues raised against it.

North West traffic commissioner Beverly Bell granted the O-licence under Section 14 of The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 after submissions to an inquiry held at St Helens Magistrates Court.

At the start of the hearing, Mrs Bell said she would be examining the application in the light of compliance issues in connection with the predecessor undertaking controlled by Mr Trezise. She said that, although Mr Trezise had called the new company Wigan Buses Ltd, it was a replacement for his previous enterprise 'Springfield Coachways'.

James Backhouse, acting for Wigan Buses Ltd, told the hearing that a new company structure had been established and assured Mrs Bell that the relevant criteria had been satisfied to warrant the granting of a licence. Representatives from Lancashire County Council and Merseytravel attended the inquiry to give evidence on Spingfield Coachways' record in operating school bus services.

They raised concerns about Mr Trezise cancelling a contract - effectively revoking his licence - while bringing a firm named Kenmore Coaches to provide the service. David Chapman, Lancashire County Council service planning manager, told the hearing that Mr Trezise had told Kenmore Coaches that he had received a new operator's licence and was only awaiting the relevant paperwork but Mr Trezise denied the charge and insisted a misunderstanding had occurred and that he had never inferred to Kenmore Coaches that he had actually been granted the licence.

Springfield Coachways: previous enterprise

Mrs Bell ruled that she had no reason to disbelieve either party and that there was likely to have been a genuine mix-up. She granted the application for a new licence to Mr Trezise after hearing that he had greatly reduced the number of buses for the application and that he was to employ his daughter, Linda Hesketh, as the new transport manager and she was going to take over the day-to-day running of the bus service.

The original application had been for 11 buses and Mrs Bell stated that she would have had no hesitation in denying the application had Mr Trezise brought that figure to the hearing. Mrs Bell ruled that the licence be granted to Wigan Buses Ltd on the proviso that sole transport manager rights be afforded to Mrs Hesketh. In summing up, Mrs Bell said: "This

BUSINESSMAN GIVEN O-LICENCE

DAVID MILLER, CORRESPONDENT

A BUSINESSMAN constructing new maintenance workshops at premises once owned by a defunct coach firm in Leeds has been given an O-licence.

Owen Wisdom, who is investing in state-of-the-art facilities, is to be the sole director and licence holder for Wisdom Coaches Ltd, with authorisation to run up to four vehicles. Mr Wisdom's application was made under Section 14 and Schedule 3 of the 1981 Public Passenger Vehicles Act and presented for consideration at a Public Inquiry in Leeds on Wednesday.

Pictures showing concrete foundations and a maintenance pit were shown at the North Eastern area hearing and the workshop should be ready for use by the end of the year but Mr Wisdom, whose brother Trevor ran the business previously before being declared bankrupt and is now the firm's nominated transport manager, faced some tough questioning from traffic commissioner Brigadier Tom Macartney about the company's future.

Mr Macartney said: "Trevor Wisdom was sent a letter saying there were problems with the licence so serious that revocation might be necessary but he did not respond to ask for a public inquiry so I have no information about how this business came to fail. "When there is a new application for a failed business, in which one of those responsible for that failed business continues to be employed, I have to be sure that vehicles are going to be properly maintained and safe on the roads."

Transport consultant Paul Carless defended the licence application and blamed the failure of Trevor Wisdom's business on maintenance problems that can be rectified with better-organised systems in addition to new workshop facilities. Mr Carless said: "The basic problem with the previous system was that vehicles had not been inspected in accordance with the required frequency as there was no forward planner.

"They are determined to make sure that what happened last time does not happen again and, if they have not learned their lesson now, they never will do but I am confident the operator now has all the systems in place and I will visit them in three months to make sure those systems are still working."

The licence was granted by Mr Macartney with five conditions:

- Vehicles must have an MOT pass rate of 90%
- Safety inspections are to be carried out every six weeks
- The Freight Transport Association is to conduct an audit every 12 weeks
- A nil-defect reporting system must be in place
- Either Owen or Trevor Wisdom must attend a refresher training course some time during 2005.

EN LIGHT

scaled-down operation

application is much-reduced and with a new transport manager bringing an improved approach. You have made allowances for a fleet of this size and you have a good reputation, fulfilling criteria under PSV section fourteen.

"Also, with the reduced fleet, there is a greater chance of future compliance. Mr Backhouse has sought to assure me that the business is in new hands and it is through this one new development that I have approved the application."

Mrs Bell also requested that Mrs Hesketh attend an operators' seminar in the future to familiarise herself with members of the industry. After the hearing, Mrs Hesketh said Wigan Buses Ltd would now be able to compete for school route bus contracts and that in the future she and her father could look at expanding the fleet and re-applying for a greater licence.

OTHER DECISIONS

WALES

SHROPSHIRE, May 20, 2005
Pats Coaches, Wrexham
Action: As announced, the deputy traffic commissioner's decision is that the following undertakings given by the company are to be recorded on the licence:

- Letters are to be written to all drivers (to be countersigned) regarding operation and obligations of running registered services and the operator's licence generally. A copy of the letter is to be submitted to the Traffic Area Office within 28 days of this letter.
- A documented system relating to the use of destination display boards is to be drawn up and issued to all drivers. A copy of this is to be submitted to the Traffic Area Office within 28 days of this letter.
- A written agreement with GHA Coaches regarding monitoring of services is to be submitted to the Traffic Area Office within 28 days of this letter.
- The company acknowledges that, at the date of monitoring, all six services were unregistered, therefore pursuant to Section 155 of the Act, the company is to receive a financial penalty of £75 per 17 vehicles authorised, totalling £1,275 payable within 28 days.
- No action is taken regarding the Good Repute of David Keith Davies and John Mark Davies as transport managers.

CARDIFF, May 25-26 2005
RH & DT Edwards Ltd T/A Eros Travel, Mid Glamorgan
Action: As announced, the deputy traffic commissioner's decision is that the following undertakings given by the company are noted:

- The company is to lodge with the Traffic Area Office within 14 days of the inquiry a schedule detailing in full all vehicles at each operating centre together with full details of the address of each current operating centre.
- No further action is taken save for a final warning as to the effect of further breaches of maintenance systems and prohibitions attracted.
- Mr Clayton Jones' good repute is not lost.
- The application to vary the licence is granted.

NORTH WESTERN TRAFFIC AREA

BOLTON, May 17, 2005
Watts John Malcolm & Timothy John T/A T M Travel, Chesterfield, Derby
Action: Formal warning
Undertaking recorded

EASTERN TRAFFIC AREA

CAMBRIDGE, April 26, 2005
June Head, Anthony Mark Head & Sandra Jean Johns T/A Reliance Coaches (Alec Head) Partnership, Lutton Peterborough
Action: PSV - S17 - Condition attached to authorise 25 vehicles only with effect from 30 June 2005.

PSV - S17 - Licence is to be suspended until 25 vehicles have been subjected to a fresh MOT and all have passed on the first occasion of presentation. Suspension is to be effective from 30 June 2005.

The operator has promised to demonstrate evidence of adequate capital and reserves by 31 May 2005, in the absence of which the licence shall be revoked.

CAMBRIDGE, April 29, 2005
Max Services T/A Max Travel, Lowestoft, Suffolk
Action: PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for.

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WORKING TIME REGULATIONS AND THE RECORDING OF 'REST'

Q FURTHER to the clarification of the duty now placed upon transport company employers by the new Road Transport Working Time Regulations with regard to 'work' records, (CBW, June 9), can you comment as to the possible impact of these regulations on the decision in the Bowens case which took non-transport-related work into account when assessing rest time for part-time coach drivers?

Bowens' test case: did it resolve rest/working time issues?

A *Point taken. However, while we accept the significance of your reference with regard to the records and enforcement aspects of the Road Transport Directive (RTD) and for EC Drivers' Hours records in general, we believe that other responsibilities exist for employers in the road transport industry.*

We assume that your main concern is that, because of the RTD's unambiguous work recording requirement of employers of mobile workers, this should mean that cases such as that concerning Bowens will not now be pursued to prosecution. However, we are of the opinion that the general and overwhelming health-and-safety duty placed upon the employer by the RTD still requires him/her to take 'all reasonable steps' to ensure that the provisions regarding daily and weekly rest for mobile workers are complied with.

We realise that CBW's position begs the question 'what is rest?' and raises the issue of what further steps an operator can take to check that the employee is fit for duty - other than questioning the employee outright. The law does not require an employee to produce a record of his/her 'rest' activities nor, in our view, would it be deemed to be reasonable for an employer to demand such a record.

This aspect of reporting/recording will no doubt become a matter for the courts to decide in due course. Meanwhile, we are reminded of the case of DPP v Guy (1998), which was drawn to our attention by Solicitor CR Butterfield (CBW, February 24). This case referred approvingly to the judgment in the case of Witchell v Abbott (1966), which stated that there was "nothing to prevent an employee from doing anything that he likes during his rest hours..." Indeed, we suggest that it is worth bearing in mind that, while the current and proposed EC Drivers' Hours regulations require that 'rest' be taken, there is nothing in these regulations to require any particular time to be dedicated to sleep.

Our comment, therefore, is that, contrary to what you might wish, the RTD would appear to place an even greater responsibility on employers in respect of ensuring that their PSV drivers are healthy and safe at work, and that the issue of what activity qualifies as rest for a driver is still open to question.

SEATBELT WEARING ON PSVs - EXEMPTIONS?

Q TALK of the EU requirement for all PSV passengers over two years of age to wear the seatbelts provided on PSVs has led me to think about possible exemptions which might be included in the UK legislation yet to be announced.

To assist me in my consideration of what will undoubtedly become a problem for operators and drivers, can you remind me of the exemptions contained in the current law on seatbelt wearing?

A *As you say, we await an announcement by the UK Government regarding the implementation of enforced seatbelt wearing in UK by passengers on PSVs.*

After the 'Consultation' in 2004 the UK Government announced it intended to bring in new law by July 2005 but, at that time, it recognised the concerns expressed by the industry with regard to enforcement.

The Government has remained silent on the enforcement aspect and an appropriate announcement by the Department for Transport is awaited.

With regard to the exemptions to enforcement; as the current law does not apply to rear seat passengers in large PSVs, there is little here which might help you. The only PSVs in which rear seatbelt wearing is compulsory are minibuses weighing less than 2540kg unladen. In these vehicles seatbelts or restraints must be worn by children of ages between three and 13 years and the enforcement of the wearing rests with the driver.

The general law on seatbelt wearing in vehicles in UK (The Motor Vehicles [Wearing of seat belts] Regulations 1993, contains the following exemptions from the requirement to wear a belt for specific persons:

- *The driver when reversing a vehicle*
- *A driving instructor (as defined in the driving licences regulations) while supervising a learner driver in a manoeuvre which includes reversing*
- *The holder of a certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner exempting him or her from wearing seatbelts on medical grounds*
- *A constable or prison officer protecting or escorting another person*
- *Firemen*
- *A taxi driver while seeking hire, answering a call for hire, or the driver of a private-hire vehicle while the vehicle is being used to carry a passenger for hire*
- *A qualified tester who is conducting a person in a driving test and who, by wearing a seatbelt, would endanger him or herself or any other person*
- *A person riding in a vehicle under trade plates while investigating or remedying a mechanical fault in the vehicle.*

To what degree these exemptions might alter when the UK Government implements regulations to satisfy the requirements of EC Directive 2003/20 remains to be seen by all of us.

The Editor, *CBW*, Emap Active, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough, PE3 8DZ e-mail *mark.williams@emap.com*

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To... mark.williams@emap.com

Cc... The Editor, *CBW*, Emap Active, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough, PE3 8DZ

HGV MIX-UP CAUSED O-LICENSING HASSLE

From: Anon
Name and address supplied

I RECENTLY changed jobs.

My former employers were based in the Eastern Traffic Area and I was named as a CPC holder on their licence. I have since moved to a company based 4 miles south of the boundary between that Traffic Area and the South Eastern & Metropolitan one (SEMTA) and now find myself in the latter area. My new employers wanted me to appear on their licence as a CPC holder (it was one of the reasons why they engaged me) and I have just been through hoops of fire for the last month trying to achieve this for them without producing any discernible result. I have also uncovered some alarming shortcomings in the process of adding new CPC holders to a PSV O-licence while doing so.

I hold CPC exemption granted as far back as 1979 by the former Chartered Institute of Transport (CIT) and also in 2000 by The Institute of Transport Administration (on the basis of my CIT examination results). On changing jobs I decided not to use my CIT exemption certificate, even though it has unlimited validity, since it includes a home address that is out of date and might be returned to the wrong place as a result.

My IoTA certificate, on the other hand, didn't include my address but specified an expiry date (in this case December 31 2000) and, although it was the one shown to the Eastern Traffic Area initially and accepted by them they never asked to see another, even when the licence there came up for renewal.

Some shenanigans involving a gentleman in another Traffic Area (which I needn't go into in detail here as they were widely reported at the time, apart from saying that this person managed to beat the system at IoTA and consequently obtained an exemption certificate I think he wasn't entitled to) led IoTA to suspend issue of these certificates entirely during 2004 until tighter controls were in place. They now are and I can assure you they are strict - I've just been through them and I was one of the people who contributed to their early formative stages as guidelines to the institute's council.

After eventually receiving my new "valid for life" IoTA certificate I promptly fired it off to SEMTA by recorded delivery along with our PSV O-licence document, asked for my name to be added to our licence and felt things were all over when my certificate came back from them in the SAE we'd provided with nothing other than a compliment slip added. I was wrong.

This morning we received a form 'GOL54' by post from SEMTA, which asked my employers and I to enter into an undertaking with the SEMTA traffic commissioner that we would comply with the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995. Since that Act deals solely with HGVs and we don't own or operate any it perplexed me.

I was initially inclined to say that we should both sign it unaltered, since it was then really a worthless piece of paper since we're not an HGV operator at all and if we did at some time go haywire with our PSVs we could easily repudiate the undertakings given in it.

In the end professionalism caught up with me, though, and I struck out the words "Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995" and wrote in by hand "Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981" above them instead. I now fully expect receiving a claim from SEMTA that I've "defaced" their form and they'll be sending me a new one to complete - we will then, perforce, have to pretend we're the truckers they think we are, and repudiation of the undertakings we give them becomes more likely. I do wonder how many PSV wide boys and their sharp suited lawyers have used this loophole before though? Enter into an undertaking to run trucks properly but then run only coaches badly and then claim you were never expected to run the coaches properly in the first place.

Full marks to IoTA here for tightening up on CPC exemptions but zero to SEMTA though for regarding coach operators as the same as the cowboys who run some of the nation's tipper trucks and then asking PSV operators to enter into worthless undertakings on the basis that they're the same kind of people.

IMPRESSED WITH NEW-LOOK CBW

From: Chris Wales
Chief Executive Coach Tourism Council

CAN I say how impressed I am with CBW's new layout and format. As usual it continues to have all the must-read news and information on the PSV industry but now with added flair.

I was particularly taken with your in-depth interview with Jimmy King, which again shows how CBW has its finger on the pulse of our industry. From a CTC point of view Out&About now sparkles with news and views of the tourism industry.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

PUT YOUR CASE AND *WIN* A 24-HOUR CAR CROSSING FOR TWO WITH SEAFRANCE

GROUPS HOTLINE
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DOWNTIME A DOWNSIDE

Bonded glazing has brought with it some significant benefits in building vehicles, and improved their appearance, but downtime has been a downside.

Replacing glass isn't something you can do with a length of cord these days; not only does the glass and bonding compound have to be removed, but the old substrate has to be chemically 'keyed,' new compound added, the glass aligned and mounted in the aperture.... and then the compound has to cure.

North West Coach & Bus Windscreens, which set up in 2003, has been acutely aware of this problem, and is now using bonding compound which cures in an hour, cutting operator downtime to ore acceptable levels.

Run by Tony Natale and Elizabeth Sealeaf, the Bacup, Cheshire company has chosen 'Kepping You Moving' as its mission statement, and is aiming to cover the M6/M62/M1 corridors as well as nearby Leeds and Manchester areas.

North West Coach & Bus Windscreens will be at Coach & Bus Live at the NEC in October.

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PAINTING A ROSY PICTUR

Growth fuels coach painter and repairer S&G's expansion. Martin Cole reports

In under two years, Chesterfield-based S&G Coachworks has needed to double its capacity to cope with an increasing volume of work.

The business was initially started by Pete Shaw and Mick Grayson - both specialists in vehicle body repair and refinishing. Pete Shaw has now left the business and is currently busy building a house in Italy. Prior to embarking on a different lifestyle, Mr Shaw was able to negotiate a new partner for S&G to ensure its financial stability before leaving Mick Grayson as the sole director. This new partner is well known in the coach and bus industry but wants to keep its name out of the equation.

Continued stability has enabled Mick Grayson to restructure the business over the past six months and construct another new spray oven. The team installed the new unit itself and has remodelled the rest of unit by installing another roller-shutter door to the preparation bay. This new booth has allowed the business to function more efficiently by slashing the wait between preparation and finishing and it has cut the time taken to complete re-sprays on vehicles having two or three colours applied.

Since its inception, S&G has majored on delivering top quality and this is reflected in the amount of repeat business the company has generated and the number of high-profile coach operators and coach dealerships taking an interest in S&G's capability.

Local operators TM Travel and Slack's Coaches frequently take their repair and respray work along and S&G has since invested in panel pressing equipment to make panels that are not readily available through the dealer or importer. Repairing accident damage has also become a natural part of S&G's portfolio and it often finds itself undertaking structural repairs.

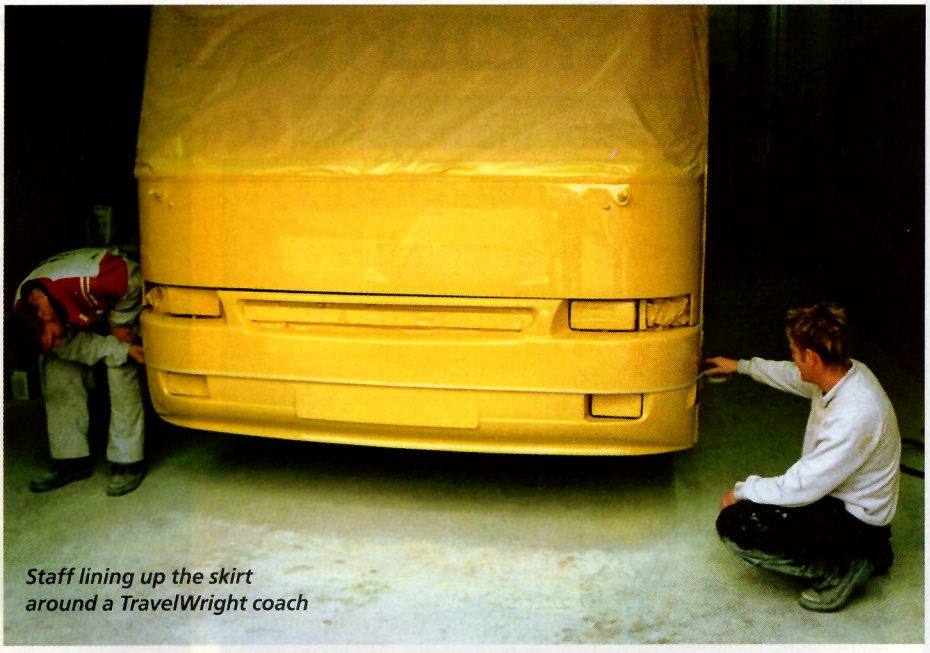
The company is also set up to fit full-length stretch panels and has also invested in a new scissor-lift platform to make life easier when repairing, preparing or painting double deckers.

Regular clients also include Johnson Brothers of Worksop, Redfern Travel, Marshalls of

Centre bay now hosts a second spraybooth to increase throughput

E

Below: Redfern's new Irizar PB transformed from its stock white original colour



Staff lining up the skirt around a TravelWright coach

'In an industry where 'image is everything' Mick Grayson's insistence on high standards has not gone unnoticed'

Graphics are produced locally by Sign Image

Sutton-on-Trent, Wilfreda Beehive, McKewans of Mansfield, Ashley Travel, TravelWright of Newark, TravelGreen of Doncaster, Silverdale of Nottingham, Grayscroft of Mablethorpe and Expressways of Barnsley.

In an industry where 'image is everything' Mick Grayson's insistence on high standards has not gone unnoticed and the reputation the company built has been done no harm by contracting the services of Sign Image - a vinyl graphics specialist with a distinct flair and creativity for developing designs and styles to suit vehicle liveries. Run by Carl Carnell, the service is mobile and he has all the necessary materials and equipment in a van to deliver a complete on-site service.

Mr Grayson said: "Our main aim is to produce high-quality finishes for our customers. I've spent some time looking around and I don't think there are many places that come close to what we can provide."

S&G prefers to undertake the most complete of respray work which involves a total strip-down of all rubber trim, handles and locks, bumpers, locker doors, mirrors and lights. More time is involved in the preparation but the finished job looks far more professional. Wheelarch panels are removed and treated separately while louvred vent panels are sent for bead blasting to ensure the new paint will stick to the metal. Following the paint process, S&G's Level 1 service also includes a mirror-polished finish prior to collection.

Level 2 saves a few pounds and offers operators the choice of having the same complete and thorough body stripping process but without the polishing operation afterwards - or a partial body strip with more emphasis on masking window and door rubbers, and including a polish.

Level 3 - the cheaper of the options - allows for a partial strip, masked rubber trims and the same good quality respray.

Each of the levels are priced accordingly and vary mainly because of the labour content.

Plans for the immediate future involve a period of familiarisation with the expanded facility. Although the staff are working long hours and the booths are being used to capacity, S&G does not propose taking on additional staff until they can see their new levels of business remaining constant.

Mick Grayson said: "We are enjoying our success and we are all working very hard but it would be all too easy to take on more painters and then find if the work dropped away that we were forced to slim down again. There's no doubt we are under a bit of pressure but we are not going to compromise on quality just to push things through a bit faster. Once I know I can take people on and am absolutely sure they will be gainfully employed, I'll be happy to build the workforce up - not just to gain additional throughput but to relieve the pressure on the existing team."

S&G Coachworks is easily accessible - a few miles from the M1 motorway at Old Whittington on the outskirts of Chesterfield.

■ For a quotation call Mick Grayson on 01246 450700.

CAN YOU MOTIVATE YOUR

Pay levels are not the major motivator for your workforce, argues Ian Sadler of Creative Management Development Ltd

ASK most people what motivates others and the answer is often - 'money'.

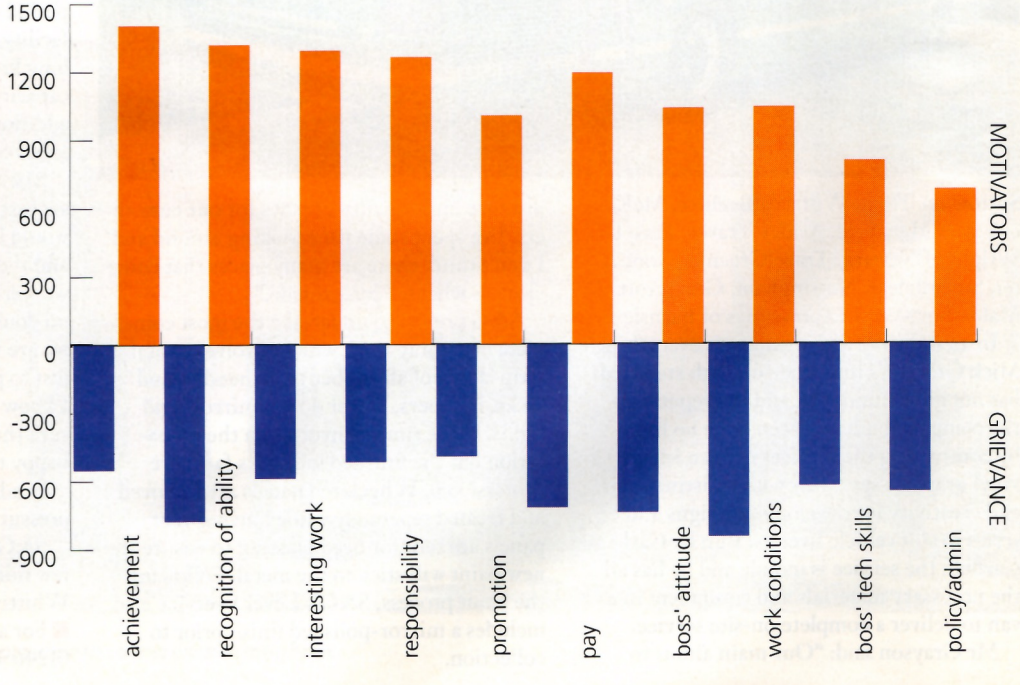
But does a pay increase equal a real increase in productivity? Generally not, research has indicated. However, pay people less than they think they're worth and you get less from them - unless other key factors compensate.

Common sense? Perhaps. But is it common practice? After all, these extra 'key factors' (which I describe below) make more demands on managers as people, on their behaviours, even their values in work. These issues seem critical in our industry, with problems of retention, morale, customer focus, even attention to detail.

This is all based on a well-tested theory of motivation by Frederick Herzberg. It's not new but at CMD we have found in tests with hundreds of first-line bus managers that it really rings true. Since 1995 we have asked delegates on many training programmes to undertake a confidential test. First, they consider what motivates them in general. Interestingly, pay only rolls in at number five. What come out top are 'a sense of achievement', 'recognition', 'interesting work' and 'responsibility'. This is entirely in line with Herzberg's findings, and validated by many other research projects in other industries.

Then we ask delegates to consider their job at present. What factors are missing, and how much does this hit their motivation? The graph below shows those interesting results - for it

Below right: These figures represent the cumulative scores of all respondents. Motivators: respondents consider Herzberg's factors and reflect on how much each contributes to their motivation in general. Scores from 0 ('does not motivate') to 4 ('motivates me a great deal'). Grievance: respondents reflect on how much each factor - if missing in their current job - is causing them a sense of grievance. Scores from 0 ('no grievance') to 4 ('a great deal').



PROFILE

IAN Sadler has been an inspirational management and motivational trainer since 1988. He is a Director of CMD (Creative Management Development Ltd). He can be reached directly on *cmd@acutrain.co.uk*

STAFF WITH MONEY?

TOP 4 MOTIVATORS

- *A sense of achievement*
- *Recognition*
- *Variety in the work*
- *Responsibility (in line with expectations)*
- *Top turn-offs*
- *Not being valued*
- *Work conditions*
- *The boss' skills!*

THREE TIPS ON HOW TO GIVE RECOGNITION

1) Thank people for the 'added extras' they give
2) Positive feedback should be specific - then good practice will be repeated!
3) 'Thank you' for effort is the best management investment you make

THREE WAYS TO STOP UNDERMINING STAFF

1) Never, ever, dress someone down in front of others
2) Avoid criticising initiatives when the outcome is wrong. You'll never get initiative again!
3) Avoid the 'soft-soap' approach to criticism. It doesn't wash.

seems that, in the bus industry, the most critical issue is a lack of genuine recognition for the work that is done (if we consider both above and below-line figures). We can even speculate from the results that this might be linked to grievance over 'work conditions' and 'the boss's attitude'. Then pay level becomes the language of grievance.

This result, of course, leaves companies and their managers having to take seriously and personally the how-to's of delivering on real motivation.

Indeed, if all that managers do is massage the pay rates without touching other key factors then - no surprise! - the fundamental motivation issues do not go away - or, as one manager reported to me after a noticeable pay rise for drivers: "We've got a lot more applicants but we're still losing existing staff at the same rate."

Let's face it, some of these motivational factors are easier to introduce than others. For example, it is not always easy among operational staff to increase the 'interest level' of the job. That said, bus companies are starting to take seriously the need for more flexible working patterns. They see this as a key motivator in others sectors, enhancing loyalty and decreasing staff turnover costs. Again, responsibility may not always hit everyone's button. Some people like to duck responsibility and just carry out instructions as given - but are there fewer of these people in truth than some managers would prefer to believe? After all, we all know stories of difficult individuals who are turned around - step by step - by starting to own the results of their efforts.

To give someone a sense of achievement takes forethought and time. This is because a vital factor here is a feeling of contributing to a bigger plan. Few bus company staff we train are aware of the One-Year (let alone the Five-Year) Plan. How many are alive to the transport issues and initiatives in the local community and their part in them? How many are made to feel part of a vitally important industry, without which the country would virtually stop? Our experience on many training courses is that junior managers and staff are typically kept pretty much in the dark. For example, even those who make critical expenditure decisions usually do not know the budgets within which they work. Or, repeatedly we find that any public charter response (eg, standards on responding to complaints) are least known by those who most need them - the drivers.

Perhaps the key factor easiest to affect, the quick win, is to give individuals a sense of recognition and value. We have to skill managers to look every day for the added extras that people give to the company. What is more, we need to train managers to focus much more on the positives and the specifics. This doesn't require Employee-of-the-Month Schemes, however laudable. We don't have to wait for top down initiatives from Head Office. It just requires a pair of eyes, an enthusiasm to help others be successful, and the drawing in of breath... to say "Thank You."

'Perhaps the key factor easiest to affect, the quick win, is to give individuals a sense of recognition and value'

WINGS OPTS FOR THE SPRINTSHIFT ON SOROCO

WINGS Luxury Travel of Hayes, Middlesex, has opted for a Sprintshift transmission on its latest acquisitions - a pair of Mercedes-Benz Sprinter-based Optare Soroco minicoaches.

The company chose the clutchless system to help reduce driver fatigue and eliminate clutch wear - common factors in coping with London traffic.

"Most of our work is in and around central London," said Bill Gritt, who runs the firm with his brother Fred. "Our staff members tell us that the Soroco is a delight to drive, especially with the clutchless gearchange system, and is very nippy in city centre traffic."

Another advantage in congested traffic is the narrow body width of two metres - making it easier to get through the traffic. Yet, internally, the Soroco has plenty of space, a high roof and deep panoramic side windows.

"It's also a good-looking vehicle that is very presentable to our corporate and private-hire customers and comfortable for the passengers," added Mr Gritt. "And there's ample room for luggage in the large rear boot, which is important in our business where we often move tourists, who usually have plenty of baggage, between Heathrow and their hotels."

Wings Luxury Travel has built a strong reputation over 27 years of operating high-quality vehicles. The two Sorocos join a fleet of 25 and were built to a high specification with 16 Fainsa high-back seats, of which 12 are reclinners. The seats are upholstered in leather and have gangway armrests and three-point, inertia-reel seatbelts. Additional features include air conditioning, a CD/DVD player and PA system.

Wings carries out its own servicing and maintenance in workshops at its base in the West London Bus and Coach Centre at Hayes. Bill Gritt said: "Soroco is an easy vehicle to work on and very reliable." The company expects to keep them for three years, during which they will each cover around 120,000 miles.

FACT FILE

CHASSIS/ENGINE: **Mercedes-Benz Sprinter**
BODY: **Optare Soroco**
TRANSMISSION: **Sprintshift**
SEATS: **16**
SPEC: **Leather seats, air con, CD/DVD, PA system**

B9TL MAKES UK DEBUT AT WEAVAWAY TRAVEL OF NEWBURY

THE FIRST Volvo B9TL tri-axle double deckers for the UK have entered service with Weavaway Travel of Newbury.

Originally developed for the Hong Kong market, the B9TL is claimed to combine the capacity of a double decker bus with the comfort of a coach. Six East Lancs-bodied B9TLs are now operating Weavaway's school contract services for Berkshire County Council.

Partner, Simon Weaver, strongly believed the concept that worked so well in Hong Kong would be perfect for his requirements. He said: "With the increased capacity of the Volvo B9TL, in effect, it does the job of two vehicles."

The B9TL is 12.4m long and is powered by Volvo's D9C 9.4-litre engine rated at 340bhp and with an automatic gearbox. It can accommodate 102 seated passengers in comfortable coach style seats with three-point belts. Other features on the buses include tinted glass, tables, CCTV and luggage racks.

FACT FILE

CHASSIS/ENGINE: **Volvo B9TL**
BODY: **East Lancs**
SEATS: **102**
SPEC: **Coach-style seats, tinted glass, tables, CCTV**

PANTHER IS JAK'S FIRST NEW COACH

FACT FILE

CHASSIS/ENGINE: **Volvo B12B**
BODY: **Plaxton Panther**
TRANSMISSION: **I-Shift**
SEATS: **49**
SPEC: **Air-Con, double glazing, radio/DVD/Video/CD/PA**

JAK TRAVEL of Keighley has purchased its first new coach - a Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12B.

"It made sense to go for a new vehicle now and choose the specification that meets our needs," said Alan Bonson, who founded JAK with his wife Kath in 1987.

The Panther, supplied by Plaxton Coach Sales, is equipped with 49 Esteban reclining seats with three-point belts, continental door, centre demountable toilet, air conditioning, tinted double glazing, curtains and individual reading lights. Passenger entertainment is provided by a radio/DVD/CD/PA system with single screen. A video player has also been added locally by Autosound.

High-visibility red grab rails complement the wide, shallow stepped entrance, making access easier for JAK's clientele, many of whom are elderly.

The B12B rear-engined chassis features a rear mounted Volvo DH12 420bhp engine driving through Volvo's I-Shift transmission - a combination aimed at delivering excellent fuel consumption combined with easy gear changes.

Mr Bonson said: "I was impressed when I visited Scarborough before placing the order. The new company is going in the right direction, putting more thought into the build and listening more to what its customers want.

Externally, the split screen we chose reduces the potential cost of replacement and looks well with the gull-wing mirrors."

JAK Travel now operates four coaches - all Plaxton Volvos. They are engaged on a variety of work including private hire, school contracts and the company's own programme of tours and holidays.

Docherty chooses Esker

T&E Docherty of Irvine, Scotland, is dipping its toes into the prestige hire market with its new high-spec 30-seat Mercedes-Benz Esker Touring from Harry Ferguson Coach Sales Ltd.

Docherty's has also gone for a bigger model than the usual Beluga and Vario 24 seaters, for increased luggage space.

"We have been upgrading our fleet," says Docherty MD Hugh Tait, "They are now all air conditioned but this is our first 30 seater - the luggage space on 24-seaters is not great. We thought we'd go for the leather interior as well, to see how it goes and it seems to be going very well,".

When *CBW* called, the coach was in Europe, on a high end tour with DE Tours. This is the kind of work Tait sees as the midicoaches' bread and butter.

As well as leather seats throughout, Docherty's Esker also has four tables, a monitor and DVD, air conditioning, double glazing, a toilet and a full servery in the back with a sink and double fridge. The company also opted for the Webasto pre-heat system. All in, it cost £140,000.

The vehicle was delivered in early May and has performed so far with "no problems whatsoever", according to Hugh Tait.

FACT FILE

Chassis/engine:	Mercedes-Benz
Body:	Esker Touring
Transmission:	Mercedes
Seats:	30
Spec:	Full leather interior, Webasto pre-heat, double glazing, toilet

The long and short of it

IT wasn't a difficult decision for Hellyers of Fareham to opt for just 49 seats in its new 13.7m tri-axle Volvo B12B Jonckheere Mistral 70.

"One advantage of longer vehicles to us is the improved passenger comfort," says director Trevor Grant. "The coach has all the usual bells and whistles like satellite navigation, but we find it's that little bit of extra leg room which makes the difference."

Hellyers runs its own high-class tour programme in continental Europe, duties which the new coach has performed non-stop since it arrived in March. Mr Grant says he cannot comment on the tour industry as a whole beyond saying that Hellyers is very busy - the coach is solidly booked now for the whole summer, and he's very pleased with how the coach has gone so far.

"Touch wood it's been pretty good," he says, adding, "Normally you have a few little niggles with a new coach, but with this one we've had virtually none."

All 49 seats are leather trimmed. Other features include a Shades fresh water toilet, and a CD/ DVD audio-visual system. The coach is equipped with a 420bhp engine and I shift gearbox. It's the ninth Volvo in the 39-strong Hellyer fleet. Mr Grant would not reveal how much the new coach cost beyond saying, "it was a lot of money."

FACT FILE

Chassis/engine:	Volvo B12B
Body:	Jonckheere Mistral
Gearbox:	I-shift
Seats:	49
Spec:	Shades WC, CD/DVD

OTHER DELIVERIES

Bowers

Rising passenger numbers meant Bowers Coaches of Chapel-en-le-Frith needed a couple of extra midibuses.

A good track record with its existing fleet of six Optare Solos made the decision easy, and two 9.2m versions with the 2.5m body width, 31 seats and space for 13 standees were duly ordered.

They are powered by the 147bhp version of the Mercedes-Benz 900-series engine and are equipped with Integra seats with three-point seatbelts from Richards & Shaw.

The multi-stage anti-corrosion process and stainless steel framing on all Optare midibuses sealed the deal.

Moseley PCV

Maynard Travel of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and CW Moxon of Oldcotes, near Worksop, have both taken delivery of Mercedes Benz 0815 DT Sitcar Belugas from Moseley PCV recently. Moxon's is a 20/24 seater, while Maynard's is a 33 seater Beluga 2. Both have the 152bhp engine, 5S-42 gearbox, rear air suspension, double-glazed tinted side windows and radio/ CD/ PA system.

Michelin

Michelin commissioned Stanford Coachworks in Essex to convert a 15-seat Mercedes Sprinter Minibus, supplied by Enza Motors. The mini bus will be used to transport staff and customers to and from its training centre in Stoke.

It features a specially designed luggage facility at the rear which can hold up to 20 suitcases safely but still leave legal access to the rear doors.

Brylaine

One important factor in Brylaine's choice of Optare seven Solos was their weight - there's a bridge with a ten-tonne limit on the route out of Boston, Lincolnshire the bus will use regularly. A full-width Solo at 10.2m long fitted the bill and with 37 seats plus 20 standee spaces it offers the flexibility to cope with demand along the route.

WHAT'S NEW

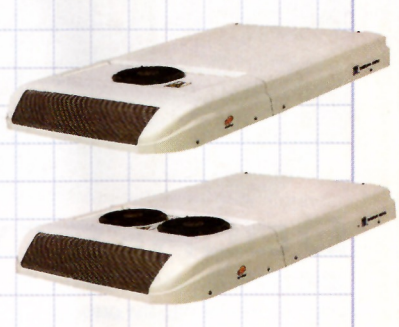
THERMO KING LAUNCHES ROOFTOP AIR-CON SYSTEM

AIR CONDITIONING specialist Thermo King has launched the Athenia Shuttle rooftop air-conditioning system.

Two models are available - the SR-250 and SR-350 - both are lightweight units with identical compact dimensions and suited to application on shuttle buses or minibuses/coaches. The SR-250 is suited to vehicles with seven to 20 passengers and the larger capacity SR-350 is suited to environments with 16-28 passengers.

According to Thermo King, the Athenia Shuttle units are the only systems available on the market that allow dual positioning of air outlets. This means evaporator blowers can be mounted either in the side duct or in the centre position with a number of outlets for free-blowing air.

Other advantages are the standardisation of the design, which easily adapts to suit different roof radii, and the high-volume fresh air intake, which assists in rapidly creating a pleasant environment. Both units are also fully compatible with Thermo King's ClimaAIRE I and ClimaAIRE II computerised control systems.



WHALE CHOOSES BRADTECH AS SOLE PUMP SUPPLIER

MUNSTER Simms Engineering, better known as Whale Water Systems, has selected Bradtech to be its only mainland supplier for the PSV market.

Bradtech stocks a comprehensive range of pumps, water systems and spare parts for the Whale products - extensively used in coach toilet and water hygiene systems.

Bradtech MD William Bradburn said: "We are delighted to be appointed sole supplier in the UK PSV market by Whale Water Systems. They are renowned for their product performance, durability and reliability. Our reputation at Bradtech is based on the same qualities, so we think it is an excellent match."

Bradtech thinks this appointment confirms the confidence suppliers and customers have in the company's reputation within the coach industry. It also means Bradtech will be able to supply Whale products and spare parts more quickly - reducing vehicle downtime.

Keith Nixon, Whale product manager for the coach and bus market, added: "Whale's experience in the design and manufacture of innovative products for mobile applications make us an ideal supplier for coach and bus manufacturers. To speed up service within the UK, we are advising all our mainland-based PSV customers to contact Bradtech if they need Whale products or spare parts."

Two of the products now available from Bradtech are the Aquasource Clear in-line water filter and the Universal pump.

The Aquasource Clear in-line water filter removes unpleasant tastes and odours from water. An important ingredient is the silverised carbon that inhibits bacterial growth inside the filter. "The filter is very easy to install but, most importantly, is maintenance free," said Steve Ticehurst, Bradtech's operations director.

The other new addition to the Bradtech product range is Whale's Universal Pump. Renowned for its almost silent operation, it has specially developed flexible feet designed to absorb system vibration and reduce noise. Equally important as far as the PSV market is concerned, it can support or replace most existing installations. Steve Ticehurst also pointed out that, if it is allowed to run dry, there isn't the usual risk of damage.

■ Contact William Bradburn or Steve Ticehurst on 01785 282800, website *www.bradtech.ltd.uk* or e-mail *sales@bradtech.ltd.uk*

Whale Water Systems is located in Bangor, Northern Ireland, tel 028 9127 0531, e-mail *info@whalepumps.com*

FACT FILE

Bradtech also supplies toilets, toilet chemicals, rapid dissolve toilet paper, hand towels, soap, dispensers, drinks machines, microwave ovens, fridges, pumps and service parts for the passenger transport industry. It is based at Seighford, Stafford, located off junction 14 of the M6.

The Whale hand pumps, foot pumps and accessories are designed especially for use in portable sanitation applications such as toilet flushing, hand washing and catering water systems. They are widely used in many coach water hygiene systems.

More information on the Aquasource Clear in-line water filter and Universal pumps can be found on the Whale website at *www.whalepumps.com/industrial* or from William Bradburn or Steve Ticehurst at Bradtech.

SHOW NEWS

UNWIN Safety is to introduce a new self-tensioning wheelchair restraint, a fold-up seat restraint and a new seat locking device at next week's Mobility Roadshow at Donington.

The Somerset mobility specialist has taken a stand at the three-day show held July 7, 8 and 9 at Donington Park near Derby to demonstrate Quattro Express, Easilok III and M1 T-Bolt, which it believes will provide operators with solutions to most of their accessible fleet.

Unwins is also keeping one of its products under wraps until the big show, and expects the carefully-guarded secret will provide a focal point for operators: "We believe the whole industry has been waiting for this product," said Gerry O'Connor at Unwins.

Quattro Express offers not only secure tie-down for wheelchairs but a fast retractor and self-tensioning. Easilok's latest incarnation combines tip-up seat and restraint for low-floor use, while the T-Bolt works with most Unwin floor railings and lockables.

■ Details from Gerry O'Connor on 07771 906686

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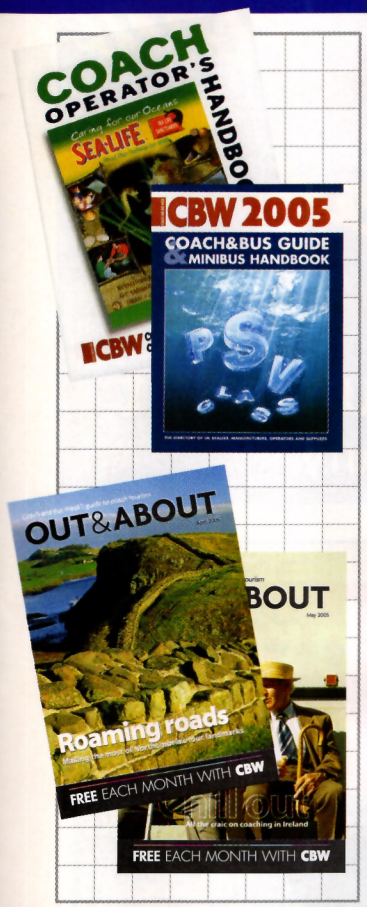

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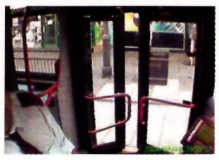

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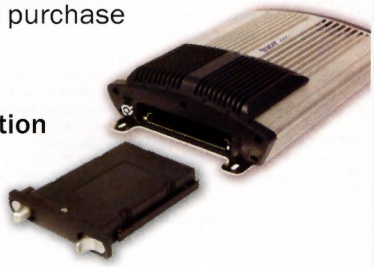

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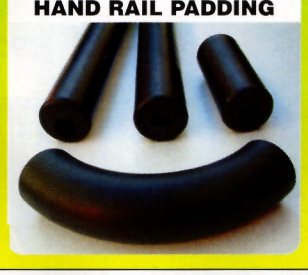

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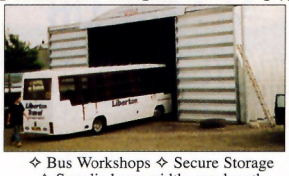

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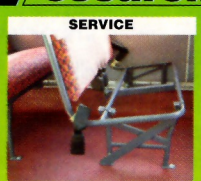

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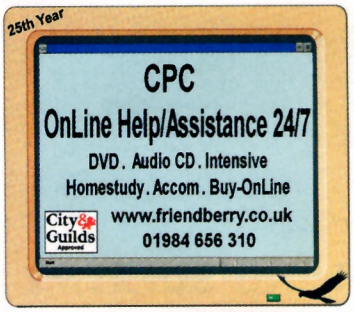

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What is its greatest asset?
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What was the smartest move you ever made?
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And the biggest mistake?
See above answer!

Your favourite car?
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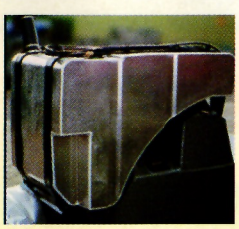

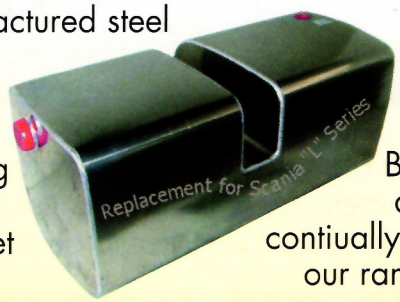

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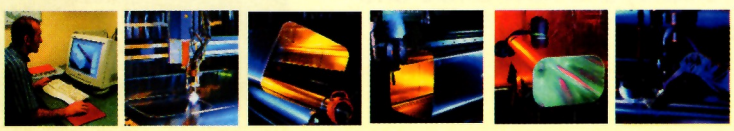

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